TRANSLATION OF
NOTICE OF REJECTION
(First Official Action)

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<u>Examiner: Umi Satoh</u>

Japanese Patent Application No. 2007-299182

The captioned application is deemed to be rejected due to the following reasons. Should the applicant have its opinion thereagainst, however, a written opinion has to be submitted within 3 months from the mailing date.

REASON 1 (Inventive Step)

The claims below of the application are deemed to be easily conceivable by those skilled in the art on the basis of the following publications circulated prior to the filing date of the application (the Convention date), therefore unpatentable in line with the provision of Art. 29(2) of the Patent Law.

Documents cited

D1: JP57177144A (corresponding to GB2100453)
D2: JP62130321U
D3: JP2002147802A (corresponding to EP1338852)
D4: JP2001349585A

Note:
Claims 1 to 33/D1 to D4
D1 discloses an exposure device having an N_2 gas supply source 11 and a humidifier 16 (especially, page 1, right column, last line to page 2, right column, first line and Figs. 2 and 3).
As disclosed in D2 (especially, Claim 1 and Figs. 1 and 2), D3 (especially, paragraphs [0004] to [0010] and Fig. 5) and D4 (especially, paragraph [0008] and Fig. 1), a humidifier having a membrane contactor (hollow fiber) is well known. Therefore, use of the humidifier having a membrane contactor in place of the humidifier 16 of D1 could be easily conceivable.
The form of the membrane contactor would have been technical matters that an artisan could appropriately determine. Moreover, purification of N_2 gas according to need would not have needed special difficulty.

REASON 2 (Lack of Clarity)

The subject application does not satisfy the requirements as provided in Art. 36(6)(ii) of the Patent Law since the claims below are deemed to be defective in the following.

C17

Note:

Claims 28 to 30

Claims 28 to 30 recite a purge gas mixture component. However, the category of these claims is unclear.

Accordingly, claims 28 to 30 are ambiguous.